

# Foundations in the UAE

## DIFC and ADGM capabilities

The UAE is a leading jurisdiction for wealth structuring and succession planning. Its two international financial centres, DIFC and ADGM, offer robust frameworks for foundations and family offices.

### Why UAE?

- Strategic location bridging East and West
- Common law frameworks ensuring global investor confidence
- Tax exemptions on qualifying income and profits

### Foundations in the UAE

A foundation is a legal entity combining features of a trust and a company, designed for, inter alia, wealth management, succession planning, and asset protection. Known as an “orphan structure”, it has no shareholders or members, and functions with a flexible governance structure, making it an ideal option for private wealth holding purposes.

### Key characteristics

- **Independent legal personality:** Assets transferred to the foundation are protected by a firewall against third-party claims
- **Governance:** Managed by a council (minimum two members), which may include founders, beneficiaries, or fiduciary providers
- **Flexibility:** Founders can amend, revoke, or terminate during their lifetime
- **Purpose:** Charitable or non-charitable objectives, including wealth preservation and corporate structuring

#### DIFC foundations

- Governed by DIFC laws
- Establishment timeline: 4-5 weeks
- Requires registered office in DIFC and annual filings
- Permitted to hold various asset classes without restrictions
- Tax transparency option available, subject to fulfilling conditions

#### ADGM foundations

- Operate under ADGM’s common law framework
- Establishment timeline: 4-5 weeks
- Requires registered office in ADGM and annual filings
- Permitted to hold various asset classes without restrictions
- Tax transparency option available, subject to fulfilling conditions

### Why choose UAE foundations?

- Tax efficiency: No corporate or personal income tax for qualifying entities
- Asset protection: Shielded from probate and creditor claims
- Global recognition: DIFC and ADGM ranked among top international financial centres
- Flexibility and control: Founders retain significant governance powers
- Regulatory excellence: DIFC and ADGM operate under internationally recognised standards
- Ownership flexibility: 100% foreign ownership permitted
- Geography and asset type: Geography and asset agnostic
- Cost efficiency: The costs of establishing and maintaining foundation structures are highly attractive as compared to other jurisdictions

### IQ-EQ services

- Regulatory licensing and compliance with end-to-end support for applications and filings
- Risk management with AML/KYC via technology platform such as MaxComply
- Administration and reporting with comprehensive governance and reporting solutions
- Global integration linking UAE structures to international strategies

## Why IQ-EQ?



### Global scale, local expertise

Combining international best practices with UAE market knowledge



### Client-centric approach

Customised solutions for complex structures



### Technology-driven

Advanced compliance and reporting tools

## Key contacts



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## Key facts and figures\*

People	Jurisdictions	Assets under administration	Minimum senior team experience	Funds under administration
<b>6500<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>24</b>	<b>\$857<sup>bn</sup></b>	<b>20<sup>yrs</sup></b>	<b>800<sup>+</sup></b>

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New Zealand  
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Jersey  
Luxembourg  
Mauritius  
The Netherlands  
South Africa  
Switzerland  
United Arab Emirates  
United Kingdom



\*Correct as of February 2026

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